

By Andy Marquis, TheBayNet.com

Congressman Steny Hoyer (D: MD 5th – House Minority Whip) hosted a town hall meeting at Westlake High School on Monday night to discuss jobs and other issues. The centerpiece of the discussion involved American manufacturing, part of Hoyer's "Make it in America" push.

"America is facing a challenge," Hoyer said. "We need to create 125,000 jobs a month. Two million jobs have been created in the past two years, but eight million jobs have been lost in the last eight years."

From there, Hoyer moved on to talk about the global workforce and how America is in a better position to compete than it has been in recent years.

"We invent so much of the new technology in this country," Hoyer added. "We develop it, but it's manufactured overseas. Salaries are rising overseas; salaries overseas aren't as competitive anymore. Transportation is more expensive today. The competitive disadvantage (of overseas manufacturing) is disappearing."

In order to encourage more manufacturing in America, Hoyer said Congress needs to act to: Stabilize the middle class, improve education, improve infrastructure and impose smarter regulation. Hoyer also spoke about the economic collapse, he claims, resulted from deregulation of Wall Street.

"If you take the referee off the field, the little guy will get trampled," Hoyer said. "We took the referee off the field and people lost jobs, they lost their homes and their sense of security. We put the referee back on the field but now we've got to make sure our regulations are smart."

Hoyer addressed concerns about the Chinese manipulating their currency to be more competitive in the workforce, saying the Senate passed a bill to take up the issue but it remains stalled in the House.

Hoyer commented about the American Jobs Act proposed by President Barack Obama last month. Hoyer said independent economists believe the bill would create anywhere from 1.5-1.9 million jobs, keep 240,000 teachers employed, keep thousands of law enforcement officers employed nationwide and improve infrastructure.

After showing a video highlighting his “Make it in America” push, Hoyer moved on to another political hot button: Deficit reduction. He spoke about the importance of the deficit super committee.

“Their recommendations must be considered,” Hoyer said. “My generation owes it to future generations to do something about the National Debt. All of us need to be part of the solution. If we don’t confront the debt now, young people will confront it in the future.”

While talking about debt, Hoyer emphasized the need to invest in education, infrastructure, innovation and research.

After his comments, Hoyer opened the floor to residents to ask him about their concerns.

“African Americans have been hit hardest (by the recession),” Cornell Posey, founder and president of the Bucket TEA Party said. “Will the House pass a jobs bill by the end of the year?”

“I hope so,” Hoyer responded. “The American Jobs Act had 51 votes in the Senate, but you need 60% to pass anything.”

The “60%” speaks specifically about a seemingly permanent filibuster that has been placed on almost any piece of legislation to come through the Senate. The filibuster has been used hundreds of times since 2007 which has frustrated Senate Democrats and progressive pundits.

In response to a question asked by Mark Nafzinger of Edgewater, Hoyer spoke about the need for the passage of the Troubled Asset Relief Program (TARP – more commonly known as the

bailout). He said it was necessary to prevent a global depression and had bipartisan support in the House and Senate.

“What are your efforts to ensure government employees aren’t the targets or scapegoats of the Deficit Supercommittee,” Shirley Jones of Ft. Washington asked. Hoyer again reiterated that everyone would have to make sacrifices to balance the budget.

“Federal employees have taken a hit already,” Hoyer said. “Federal employees also realize they have a job and others around them don’t.”

“School kids have creative ideas,” Lynette Jewel said. “Some kids are not college material.”

Hoyer responded by emphasizing the need for trade students, and funding for trade schools much like the College of Southern Maryland trade center he visited earlier in the day.

Constitutional Conflict

Kevin Pearl of Mitchellville pressed Hoyer over the use of authorization in Libya, which he says violated the War Powers Act, and the assassination of suspected terrorist and American citizen Anwar al-Awlaki. Pearl said al-Awlaki’s assassination was also unconstitutional.

Hoyer emphasized that there are many who seek to do harm to residents of the nation, and said that the United States Military continues to work to undermine the capabilities of al-Qaida.

Youth in the Spotlight

Westlake High School Principal Chrystal Benson shined the spotlight on WHS Student Government Organization President Yaffet Meshesha and WHS Student Representative Taylor

Brooks. Brooks is also a student member of the Charles County Board of Education. Both students delivered brief remarks and got to shake hands with Congressman Hoyer.

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